

Big cities want larger share of urban renewal money

Mayors from big cities with big urban renewal programs sent a delegation to Washington last week to lobby for a larger share of the \$1 billion that Housing Secretary George Romney has to pass out.

They also want to keep Romney from giving high priority to allocation of funds to additional cities—most of them in the South—that want to start urban renewal programs for the first time.

The problem is the \$1 billion ceiling on funds, and the fact that each year cities with projects in execution need more allocations—called “amendatories”—just to cover the added costs to complete projects already under way.

Year by year, these amendatories keep gobbling up more and more of the urban renewal appropriation. This year, Romney said he would allocate only \$450 million of the \$1 billion total to amendatories.

Furthermore, he said that he would allow just one more amendatory for each project. Then it would be up to the city to complete the project for that amount.

Last week, Romney backed off his hard-and-fast rule on future amendatories, but did not commit himself to a proposal of the mayors, from such cities as San Francisco, Providence, Pittsburgh, Seattle, and Boston, that he adopt a policy that would allow the \$450 million to be spread around to more cities. Rather than allocate to the city the total increase it needs to complete a project, the mayors suggested that he parcel out only the amount the city says it could spend for just the coming year.

Congress may speed flow of construction funds

The pressure on congressmen to finish this year's business quickly in order to leave time for re-election campaigns this fall may help make construction funds available to government agencies earlier than they were last year.

The multi-billion dollar appropriations bills for public works and military construction will be started to the House floor by mid-June, according to House Appropriations Committee Chairman George Mahon (D-Tex.).

Construction appropriation bills will still come last in line in order to give the related authorization bills time to be approved, as they must be before appropriations can be voted.

This schedule is Mahon's annual attempt to enforce an orderly processing of appropriations that Congress has ignored regularly in the past as political disputes developed over spending levels, racial issues, and the like.

For instance, the labor-health, education, and welfare appropriations bill for the current fiscal year ending June 30 did not become final until March 5.

Housing partnership is a slow seller

A hard-sell campaign in cities all across the country has been launched by the National Corporation for Housing Partnerships, the new financial institution that's trying to raise big money from corporations and banks to invest in government-subsidized housing.

Subscriptions, sold in minimums of \$100,000, have been so slow coming in that the corporation has extended the sales deadline for another month to May 15.

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As of last week, total subscriptions over three months had reached \$20 million, with officials expressing confidence that the minimum of \$37.5 million necessary to put the corporation into business will be met.